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February 3, 1975

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CYPRUS

Tensions increased in Cyprus over the weekend, following an outbreak of heavy gunfire between Greek and Turkish forces. Each side also charged the other with bad faith in the intercommunal talks.

The clashes, described by the US embassy in Nicosia as the most serious in several months, began on January 31 in northwestern Cyprus when Greek and Turkish forces exchanged heavy gunfire for about 30 minutes. Heavy firing also broke out on February 1 near Nicosia airport and spread to the UN-patrolled "green line," which separates Greek and Turkish forces in Nicosia.

While there is no information on who initiated the shooting on January 31, UN officials are "reasonably certain" that the two-hour exchange the following day was begun by Turkish forces. UN officials arranged a cease-fire, but more clashes could occur.

The latest incidents came amid Greek and Greek Cypriot charges that the intercommunal talks had made no progress because of Turkish intransigence and delaying tactics. Turkish and Turkish Cypriot officials, on the other hand, insist that some progress had in fact been made despite what they termed the inflexibility of the Greek side.

The lack of progress appears to be the result of Turkish reluctance to make meaningful concessions and Greek unwillingness to accept token gestures which might give the talks an aura of progress and lead to an extension of the cutoff date for US aid set for February 5.

If military aid to Turkey is continued, Greek Cypriot students reportedly intend to organize mass anti-American demonstrations. Greek Cypriot demonstrators damaged the US embassy on January 18 and the USIS library on January 20.

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THAILAND

Negotiations aimed at forming a coalition government in Bangkok ran into difficulty over the weekend, but an early agreement still seems possible.

The main problem is over control of the Ministry of Interior, which plays a pervasive role in domestic affairs. The conservative Thai Nation Party is demanding both the interior and defense posts as the price for its participation in a new government. Seni Pramot's moderate Democrat Party will concede defense but not interior.

The parties will meet again today in an effort to resolve the impasse prior to the formal opening of the new assembly, scheduled for Wednesday. Failure to agree soon on a center-right coalition would increase the chances of an unstable government, with the conservatives in opposition.



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ARGENTINA

The deadline passed last night without a response by the government to an ultimatum from leftist extremists. They had threatened to carry out indiscriminate killings of government officials unless they could be convinced by police that 19 captured guerrillas were still alive.

Meanwhile, presidential adviser Lopez Rega has denied widespread rumors of cabinet changes and has asserted that his relations with the military have not suffered.

President Maria Estela Peron's decision late last week to cut short her vacation suggested that some major political decisions, possibly involving Lopez Rega, were in the offing. Mrs. Peron is under heavy pressure from military, Peronist labor, and opposition political circles to curb Lopez Rega's power.

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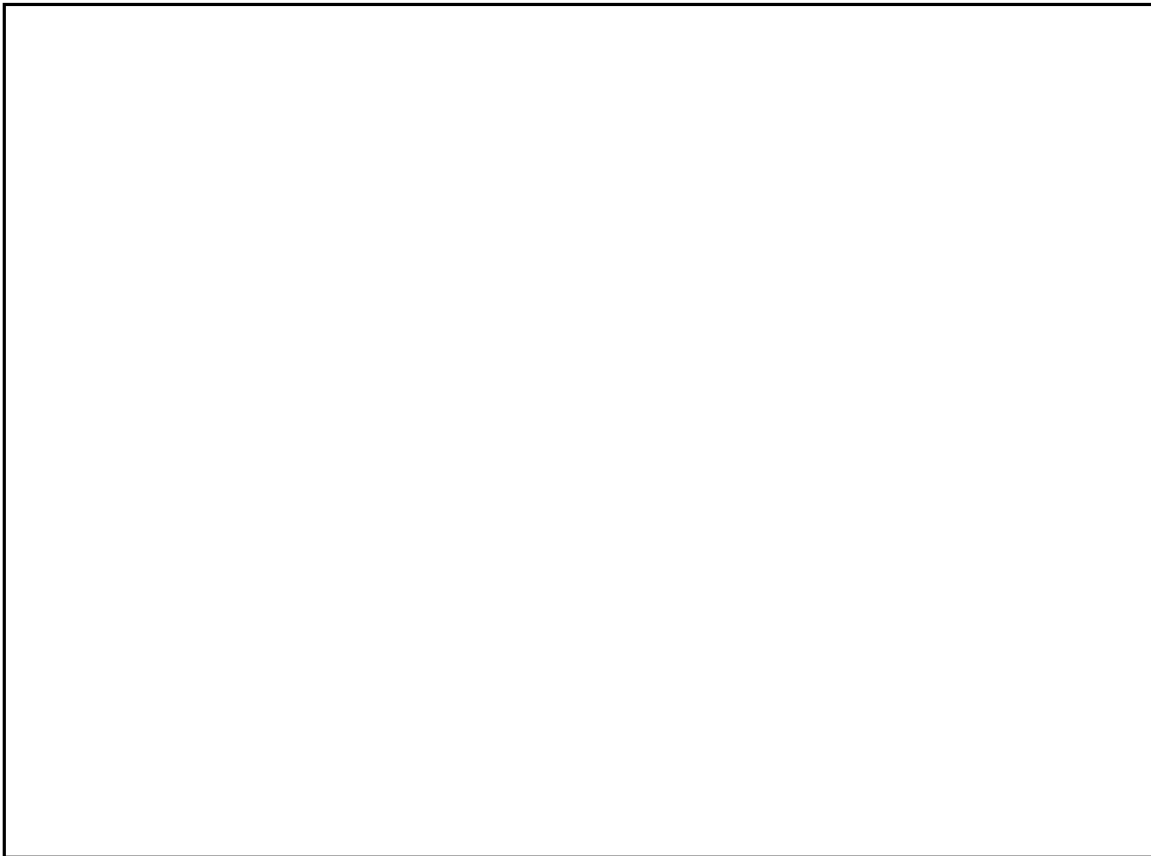
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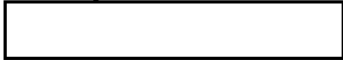
FOR THE RECORD

Colombia: The honorary Dutch consul in Cali was kidnaped outside that city this weekend by about 30 armed men. They killed one of several men accompanying the victim. A government security official speculates that the consul, a wealthy industrialist, was seized by members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. Recent reports have indicated that this group intends to emerge from several years of relative quiescence, during which time it has been training and building arms caches. If that organization is indeed responsible, its purpose probably is to extort operating funds rather than to make political demands.

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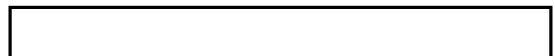
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